



# Ten Things I Hate About Me

*Randa Abdel-Fattah*

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## **Ten Things I Hate About Me** Randa Abdel-Fattah

Randa Abdel-Fattah's new novel about finding your place in life . . . and learning to accept yourself and your culture.

At school I'm Aussie-blond Jamie -- one of the crowd. At home I'm Muslim Jamilah -- driven mad by my Stone Age dad. I should win an Oscar for my acting skills. But I can't keep it up for much longer...

Jamie just wants to fit in. She doesn't want to be seen as a stereotypical Muslim girl, so she does everything possible to hide that part of herself. Even if it means pushing her friends away because she's afraid to let them know her dad forbids her from hanging out with boys or that she secretly loves to play the darabuka (Arabic drums).

## **Ten Things I Hate About Me Details**

Date : Published August 1st 2007 by Marion Lloyd (first published October 1st 2006)

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Author : Randa Abdel-Fattah

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# From Reader Review Ten Things I Hate About Me for online ebook

**Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says**

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten!

**Diversity Rating: 3 - Closer to Reality**

**Racial-Ethnic:** 5 (lots of POC characters)

**QUILT BAG:** 0

**Disability:** 0

**Intersectionality:** 3 (major point is Jamie's dissatisfaction with the lack of freedom she gets as a Muslim girl)

Look at this cute cover. Look at the legendary-rom-com-referencing title. Does this book look serious to you? No it does not, and that's how it goes right for your jugular with its talons and shows us anyone who stays silent when someone is being bullied for their identity is complicit in the related -ism (racism, ableism, etc.). So no, you're not in for something cute with a swoony romance. There's not really a romance at all. You're in for a modern-day take on the inner and outer struggles of someone who works hard to pass as white, racism and what makes someone complicit in it, and learning to respect your own culture while living in another. AND IT'S GREAT.

Jamilah went to all sorts of lengths to get what she wanted--dying her hair blonde in sixth grade and going by Jamie instead of her full name--and now she's on just the right spot on the popularity ladder to have friends and be generally invisible, but it came at the cost of the pain she feels every time popular boy Peter is racist (which is often) and stays silent. None of the other Aussie YA books that have come across the pond to the US have even mentioned racial relations, which are as difficult there as everywhere else on the planet. You understand why Jamie works so hard to hide that she's a Lebanese Muslim and hurt for her because she felt she needed to do that. When Peter opens his yap, you understand exactly why she felt it was necessary.

I do, however, wonder how she pulled off the ruse. I guess none of her friends ever heard her full name, which is ethnic enough the more racist people would question her about it, because she'd interrupt teachers and substitutes while they called role and say her name was Jamie. An explanation of that would have been nice, and if anyone had been in school with her prior to sixth grade, they might have remembered things and thrown a wrench in her plans. It's handwaved in usual "just go with it" style.

Essentially, the novel has two major subplots: Jamilah learning to shrug off her internalized self-hatred and her evolving relationship with her strict-Muslim-father-headed family. Like a number of girls would and do, she chafes under his rules that she can't go out alone or hang with boys because it would sully her honor, she's jealous of her brother's freedom, and she's embarrassed by her sister's open activism and how she sports the hijab. Many of these conflicts are rooted in Lebanese Muslim culture, but they will still cross cultural borders and speak to readers of all kinds.

Islam and her family's beliefs aren't presented as Better Than or Worse Than either; they simple Are and have strengths and flaws just like any other set of cultural beliefs. The Southern Baptist family I grew up in didn't forbid me from hanging out with boys, but I couldn't walk the same 100 yards by myself at night at age

16 when my brother could at 12. No religion wins in the "who treats women better?" contest. So I feel Jamilah on her father limiting what she can do just because she's a girl. Whether the problem is a racist suitor or judgment from the rest of the Lebanese Muslim community around them because their family isn't \_\_\_\_\_ enough, Jamilah's family has her back.

But remember, this novel won't let you pretend you're not part of the problem just because you aren't actively racist. It makes sure you know silence is consent, complicity, wrong. I have no better way to say it than this quote does:

"We buy tickets as audience members only. We never volunteer for the show itself. I know that's not an excuse. In fact, maybe we're worse." (p. 13)

This sweet little backlist title got lost in the shuffle of publishing and time, which is a shame because it's so smart. Go find a copy somewhere. You need this book. Also go watch both the movie and television series for 10 Things I Hate About You, which is referenced in the title, because regardless of sexual orientation, we'll all swoon over Heath Ledger serenading Julia Stiles.

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### **Tufa says**

In the book "Ten Things I Hate About ME," by Randa Abdel-Fattah, the main character is Jamilah, or as she wants it pronounced, "Jamie." Jamilah wants to be popular and beautiful, but she can't, she has to wear the Hijaib. The Hijaib is a muslim tradition clothing that is worn over the head (only for women to wear) to keep sacred and to not take it off in of public or infront of men. She is forced to wear it because her father is very religious and wants Jamilah to be one too.

So, lets talk about the character. Jamilah, she is a Labanese-muslim girl. She bleached her hair and wore blue contact lenses just to look pretty. But really, behind her disguise is brown haired and brown eyed, beautiful girl. But to Jamilah, it's boring and simple with no life in it. This is because every other girl has blonde hair and blue eyes and are so beautiful compared to Jamilah.

All she wants is to be a natural blue eyed, blonde haired chick. She also wants to be the attraction for boys. (If you know what I mean.) Anyways, Jmailah does this by changing her name into Jamie and gives herself a big total makeover. After that, Jamilah wants to go to a party that a boy she likes is going to, BUT, her father says "NO." Everywhere Jamilah asks to go to always ends up as a ..... "NO." So she talks to her father for the first time. It might sound weird "the first time," but Jamilah hasn't spoken to her father ever since her mother died when she was 9. But now she tries talking to him and it works out!

What I like about this book is it has many adventures. what I mean by that is Jamilah and her father are funny, her father always comment her on the she looked befor and after. And Jamilah always tries to ignore him. T do recommend this book. This is because the way the book is set up and the way its told is very interesting. If your're a person who loves to read about peoples lives and how something little effected them, then this is a great book for you. ENJOY!!!

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### **Sarah says**

i enjoyed this book. you know, it wasn't like the best thing ever but i thought overall it was pretty good. the

characters were well done and the themes are really important (and rarely addressed) so i was able to overlook some plotholes/predictableness that would have annoyed me otherwise. i thought she did a really good job of creating a main character without any self-confidence who's totally embarrassed of her middle-eastern background WITHOUT making her obnoxious. i thought it was good. and i read the whole thing last night, so you know...

#### 10 Thins I Like About This Book:

1. It addresses the current rampant anti-arab/anti-muslim/anti-middle-eastern crisis
  2. It addresses sexism & misogyny
  3. Her sister is an activist
  4. It deals with highschool cliques without being totally obnoxious about it
  5. It treats boys like real people who can be friends
  6. It's set in australia
  7. Her family is respected and important to the story instead of being a). absent or b). treated like idiots
  8. It doesn't end with everyone getting all nicely paired up in romantic couples
  9. It talks about real-life friendship issues instead of just treating friends like random acquaintances that you do things with.
  10. The main character is portrayed as lacking in self-confidence and yet not an idiot! At the same time! What's that? Complexity? Awesome!
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#### **Haidy Abouelnasr says**

I absolutely LOVE this book.

I love jamilah and shereen and timothy and bilal and amy and ahhh

I've never related this badly to any book before. Everyone read this. Please.

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#### **Younna Youssef says**

well the book goes below my expectations a little, TEN THINGS ABOUT ME is about a confused Lebanese Muslim teen she is afraid to show her heritage but i don't know why randa abdel-fattah managed to make me feel that the muslim heritage is something you should be ashamed of, she only focused about the 11 september and benladen and Jamie don't want anybody to think that her hobby is to fly planes into buildings and jamilah seems not to be so religious because she don't pray and in the end she kissed timothy so Jamilah don't represent a true muslim girl here she only wants to fit into the Aussie society and forget her arabic muslim heritage, maybe that's not what the book says but i don't know why i feel like that, i thought that randa will represent a good image for Muslims girls living in Australia but somehow she didn't

i have to admit that i like Shereen Jamilah's sister more than Jamilah

i loved reading it anyway !!!

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## Eilonwy says

3-1/2 stars, rounded down

When Jamilah Towfeek started at a new school in grade seven, she saw a chance to change other people's perception of her from "ethnic" (and possibly "terrorist") to plain old "Australian." So she dyed her hair blond, got blue contact lenses, and told everyone her name was Jamie. Now in grade ten, that decision is starting to wear on her. Racism is loud and proud in her school hallways, but how can she speak out when she's spent so long hiding her identity and muffling her voice?

I mostly loved this book (so maybe my review should have aimed for Ten Things I Love, but I'm not sure I could fill out the whole list). Jamilah has a great voice, and sounded genuinely 15 years old, with a mix of maturity and childishness. She wants to do the right thing, but struggles to figure out how she can both be honest and protect herself from the cruelty and hatred expressed by some of her classmates. She also wants to be closer to people -- both her family and her friends -- but is smacked in the face by the wall formed by keeping secrets and compartmentalizing her life.

I've rounded this down a star because while it's a fast, fun read, full of sunshine and humor, it's also a bit heavy-handed in its message about being yourself and not letting the buzzards grind you down. It seems like every three pages or so, this lesson gets pointed out to be sure the reader doesn't miss it. The plot is also fairly predictable, so the tension is situational rather than a consistent story arc.

I do recommend it, though. It won't take up much of your time, and its observations and message of authenticity in one's life are always timely. Depressingly, the story's focus on resentment towards immigrants, and suspicion of Muslims in particular, seems especially timely worldwide right now. This book does what it can to help defuse some of that.

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## Elizabeth says

Ten Things is about me is about a teenager girl from southern Sydney who's a Lebanese-Muslim and very proud of her cultural identity. She lives two lives and tries so hard to keep them separate. She feels if they collide it would ruin her whole world. She only keeps them a secret because she sees the way other people like her are treated at school and she doesn't want to seem different in their eyes. At school and in the outside world she is 'Jamie', a blonde with an Anglo Aussie background; at home she is 'Jamilah' a Lebanese-Muslim who is proud of her cultural. Jamie struggles to maintain her two personalities because the rules her over controlling father gives her. Seeing other friends having freedom that she desires so much. Life appears to be looking up for Jamie when the most popular boy in school begins to show an interest in her. Added to that she gets an after-school job and makes an email friend, John, the only person with whom she can be completely honest. However her life is turned upside down when her father announces to her that her Arabic band is hired to play at her schools 10 year formal.

It's a very good book. I encourage anyone that has problems with there true identity to read this book. It's very inspiring, and good to know that life is different everywhere

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## Sara says

This book was good, not great, and a little too simplistic (and coincidental) for me; I imagine that if you're over the age of 12, *maybe* 13, you'll think the same.

The plot revolves around a confused teen named Jamilah. She's a Lebanese Muslim in Australia who's desperately trying to hide her cultural identity from her peers by calling herself "Jamie," dying her hair blonde, wearing blue-tinted contacts, and not inviting any of her friends over to her house. Her dad forbids her to do practically everything outside of school, so she doesn't have much of a social life, except for playing in an Arabic band at her madrassa. She strikes up an email friendship with someone who calls himself "John" online (his real identity was obvious very quickly... and a little cheesy that it just *happened* to be him, but whatever) and admits to him that she's exhausted by trying to play two people, depending on where she is.

I thought the book was well written, and there aren't a whole lot of mainstream books about Muslim teens in a Western country, so that was nice. I thought Jamie was a little too hung up with trying to hide stuff, but hey, she's a teen and that's what teens sometimes do. My complaints, besides the whole email friend's real identity being too much of a coincidence, are mainly about the ending, in which everything seemed to be changing for the better - I mean *everything* - all too easily, with no major catalyst to inspire the change. It felt, once again, too coincidental and simplistic. But, I think that young teens and tweens would enjoy this book.

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## BookCupid says

**Jamilah might hate several things about herself, but only one keeps getting brought up.**

Not fitting in is like leprosy at adolescence. No one wants you on their team. And the nasty daily comments can push any teen into a huge depression. It's no wonder that Jamilah dreams of having her classmate Timothy's courage and just be herself: a Lebanese/Muslim living in Australia. So she bleaches her hair, puts on blue contacts and changes her name to Jamie. And no one "notices."

To be honest, although the idea of feeling stuck in a nationality is not new to me (yup, been there) I didn't feel like Jamilah was so worried about her background. What truly bothered her was the relationship with her dad. His overprotective parenting drove her and her siblings crazy. And she associated that with him being Muslim: no girls should go out unchaperoned, girls must be home before sunset... too many rules to list (probably like ten).

More than character growth, we get to see bonding and how communication is key.

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## Suzanne says

This is a better than average teen problem book from an Australian author, perhaps a 7 on the Peachworthiness scale because I like that it deals with a culture for which there hasn't been a lot of representation in YA lit. Yes, a 10th grader who dislikes WAY too many things about herself and can't choose an identity that works at home, with friends, and with boys, a girl that can't decide whether to accept the attentions of a popular A-hole at school or to speak up for the guy who is ridiculed instead--all these plot

components have been done and are comfortable and familiar to readers. I could even complain that while I enjoyed the story, there was too much predictability here: Jamilia/Jamie will find a way to get to her formal, even though her father is too strict to permit it; the boy with whom she strikes up an anonymous bare-my-soul-to-the-bone email relationship with is most likely to be someone she knows; her widowed father and her language & culture school teacher would be perfect together.

So what makes this decent but run-of-the-mill story special is what makes the main character special: her Lebanese-Muslim identity in an anglo-centric country. Jam has chosen to split her identities rather than deal with the teasing and name-calling at school that other Muslim teens there face. She is "passing" for Anglo through bleaching her hair and wearing blue contacts, but she feels torn and isolated and can't tell her friends the truth about why she can't go out at night or anywhere with boys besides school. She can't tell them that she plays in an Arabic music band and loves it or that she's devoted to her exuberant, but embarrassing family.

American teens could benefit from this mixture of the typical YA story with the culture infusion that will teach them about an experience that might vary in some ways from their own--fighting prejudice and stereotypes, unique aspects of Muslim identity--but will allow them to see commonalities they might not expect. At some point, most teens feel as if they come from another planet, so Abdel-Fattah's story will provide more resonance than they expect.

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## **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Sally Kruger aka "Readingjunk" for TeensReadToo.com

After the sudden death of her mother years ago, Jamilah and her older brother and sister have been raised by their conservative Lebanese-Muslim father. Being the youngest is not easy, since her older sister, Shereen, is forever finding ways to irritate their father, and her brother, Bilal, is a constant disappointment. It's no wonder that Jamilah has begun to live a double life - one at home and another at school.

She has dyed her dark hair blonde and wears contacts to hide her dark eyes. At home she is Lebanese-Muslim, but at school everyone thinks she is just a normal Sydney-born Australian like the majority of the students in the tenth grade.

Unfortunately, things aren't going very well.

Jamilah loves her heritage - the music, the religious beliefs, the food, and the family, but she hates the rules that go along with all she loves. Her father believes in a strict curfew that requires her to be home by sunset. She dreams of having a boyfriend and going on a date, but that's totally out of the question. As a result, Jamilah finds herself trying to balance both lives. Her friends see one side of her and her family sees the other.

While at school, Jamilah observes members of the popular crowd viciously taunting any students from different ethnic backgrounds. To keep her own secret, she shamefully watches silently, afraid the cruelty could be directed towards her if she speaks up to defend the others. With her double life threatening to crumble around her, she attempts to convince her domineering father that she needs more freedom than he is willing to allow.



TEN THINGS I HATE ABOUT ME gives readers a glimpse into the Lebanese-Muslim culture and at the same time demonstrates that the true and honest path is not always the easiest to travel, but perhaps the most satisfying in the end.

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### **Robin Duple says**

This was a quick read -- relatively light YA fare. Although it deals with issues of identity because of the way that Jamilah hides her Lebanese-Muslim heritage from everyone at school (including standing by while other immigrants are mocked by the most popular guy in high school), the novel never gets terribly serious. An interesting writing device is employed in various chapters of the story, wherein the action and character development is portrayed via an ongoing conversation in the form of an email exchange between Jamilah and "John," an anonymous new friend that she met in a chat room, although he says he is also a high school student somewhere in the city (Sydney).

Funny and heartwarming, this book was entertaining and likeable, although it was not as memorable or masterfully crafted as some other things that I have read in recent memory. I read it on vacation while I listened to my husband and his best friend hold an electronic music jam session in the background, and it was great for that purpose.

-Robin Duple

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### **Agnes says**

The central character of Jamilah/Jamie will be relevant to almost any immigrant girl. She embodies the whole east meets west cultural conflict so well. The duality of her identity is best seen in her two names, struggling between who she has to be at school, and who she is with her family. Much like in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, Gogol has mixed feeling about his name but accepts it in the end. The added context here is the currency of the novel in how it gives the reader a glimpse into Jamilah's world and all the negative stereotypes surrounding her background. On top of this she's a young woman negotiating her identity within the constraints of two cultures. The male characters seem to have more influence in her life, while her sister and stepmother remain less important role models. The book focuses more on Jamilah's male friendships and the ending feels a little rushed when Jamie reveals her Jamilah identity all too easily making amends with the people around her. Although the ending was a little disappointing the book is definitely worth reading and suggesting to youth and adults.

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### **Rachel says**

"I'm Lebanese-Muslim. My name's Jamilah, not Jamie. I've been hiding myself for a long time."  
"So what?"

Why the low rating?

- most annoying/pathetic/cynical main character

- amazingly lame storyline
- how to overreact 101
- 'sounds like socks on carpet'
- no plot twists, or easily foreseeable
- two dimensional characters

I could barely comprehend the extent of racism in Australian culture expressed in this book being ethnic myself in Australia. I have friends of every race and culture and they are proud to be who they are. I hope noone ever goes to the lengths that Jamilah goes to to hide herself.

\*Kind of want to rewrite this review and call it 'Ten Things I Hate about this book'

\*I forgot to add 'obvious plot holes' which I brought up in a class discussion

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## **Nasty Lady MJ says**

To see full review click [here](#)

### 10) Have a Main Character That's a Whiney Titty Baby:

Oh, sweet baby Jesus, how I could not stand Jamilah/Jamie.

She is such a weak and despicable character.

Honestly, I should've been warned enough with the premises of how she tries to hide her identity, but it's even worse than that.

There is not one thing I like about this character.

I almost felt bad because she has a sexist father. But she's not mad at him for being sexist so much. Instead, she's just mad because she can't go partying with her friends Saturday night and get drunk and laid.

And yeah, Abdel-Fattah tries to remedy this by trying to make Jamie look responsible by wanting a job, but the only reason she wants a job is to have a gateway into partying.

### 9) Have a Great Topic but an Epic Fail of an Execution:

You don't know how much I wanted this one to work. I think having a book with a Muslim protagonist of Lebanese descent would be a great addition to a rather bland world in YA.

But nopity. Nope. Nope. Nope.

The insight I was given into the protagonist's religion and culture was about on par with My Big Fat Greek Wedding, and to be honest the culture insight I got from that movie was probably better.

## 8) Have an Unrealistic Depiction of Racism:

This is an issue everywhere in the world. However, the way that Abdel-Fattah talks about racism has me fuming.

Racism, generally is not that obvious. Oh, sure sometimes it is. But to the extent it was displayed in this book it was downright unrealistic.

People who are as outright racist as Peter generally are not viewed as the BMOC. The majority of the population are going to look at him like he's a loser. Especially when he starts throwing out racist slurs.

I wish this book would've talked about the undertones of racism. Such as micro-aggressions The stuff that's not outright said, but is obviously there. If it would've taken an approach of showing this side of society that's backward rather than giving a hammy look at it, I think it would've been a lot more thought provoking than it was.

Caveat Post 2016 Election: While I still think that Peter is a cartoonish loser. His depiction is unfortunately more realistic than naive privilege me based at the time of writing this original review would like to think. Unfortunately, over the top overt racism like Peter's is making a more common appearance than it should be in today's society. While I still feel like the character was overall cartoon-like his behavior is unfortunately more realistic to today's world than I originally wanted to give him credit for. While I still wish that Abdel-Fatah had focused more on microaggressions, I can no longer say that Peter is a ridiculous caricature in good consciousness. I can also (unfortunately) no longer say that 99% of people would look at him like he is a creep that he is after all look at who the US voted for president. Shudders.

## 7) Have an Unrealistic Romance:

The romance or attempt at romance was laughable. The fact that it was a love triangle. Well, excuse me while I go empty my lunch.

In corner one we have love interest one: the most popular guy at school, who's an open bigot. Obviously, our main character should hate him and stay out of his way. But nope, he's popular so that must equal love.

I freaking kid you not. Fawn over someone who makes fun of your culture and religion just because he's the most popular boy in school.

Yeah.

And then there's boy number two who's her secret online admirer. Who's conversation is so wooden, it reads like a bad fan fic. It's obvious who this boy is, but are character of course is stupid enough to be clueless. Also, the way he behaves online makes me want to get those guys from To Catch a Predator on the case.

## 6) Have Teens Not Act Like Teens:

Or at least teens that I know.

I swear, these kids had the maturity rate of an eight-year-old, our darling protagonist included.

There was really not one character who acted their age. Well, maybe the dad character. But that's it.

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## Maya says

Out of the two books that I have read this quarter, I really liked "Ten Things I Hate About Me" by Randa Abdel-Fattah. You go on a journey with your average teenage girl. I really enjoyed this book because in a way I could relate to it and I am 99.9% sure that every girl have, or will at some point in their live will experience what The main Character Jamilah experienced. I would most definitely, highly highly recommend this book to girls ages 14-18 because there is a good message that you can get out of it. As I mentioned before, I really really REALLY enjoyed this book. I usually like to read books that I as a teenage girl can relate to which I did! I related to mainly 2 things in this book, #1. Me and the main character only have one parent alive, and siblings and #2 being, one of the 10 things Jamilah hated about herself which was feeling like sometimes its not okay to just be yourself & having to make adjustments just to fit in with everybody else.

Now I Am going on to talk in more detail about my wonderful book! Well, in my book "Ten Things I Hate About Me" it is basically about the everyday teenage girl and the feelings we go through and many questions we ask ourself. Jamilah aka Jamie is a junior in highschool, she is of Labanese and muslim backround in which she is very ashamed of. Shes really smart and doesnt have many friends because she doesnt like to open up to people, scared that they will find out who she really is( and to her thats bad because of the stereotypes about muslims and foreign people at her school) She lives with her Dad, Sister- Shareen, and Brother- Bilal (her mom died.) Ever since her mom died her dad became very strict and doesnt allow her to go anywhere or do anything that involves females interacting with males(except school) She doesnt like it, and so she tries to sneak out and lies to her dad about where she is and who she is with. She falls in love with a annoyomous guy that e-mailed her and later found out it was one of the biggest nerds in her class. She likes him, but is ashamed of it. The most popular guy in her class Peter flirts with her and she does not know how to act. I DONT want to tell the book because its soo good, so if you want to know more your just going to have to read it!!

Personally I think the author Randa Abdel Fattah wrote this book to encourage everybody but mainly teenage girls. I believe it was written because she personally experience something like this or somebody she knew did. This book did not receive any awards. In conclusion I learned something from this book well knew before I just really liked it- it was that you should never forget who you are and where you come from/just be yourself and people will love it or hate it.

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## Layla says

eeeeeehhh. I picked up this book on a whim. Maybe it's because I already passed this phase in my life that I didn't find it very relatable. In fact, the main character is quite annoying. You see, I am a Muslim girl growing up (living) in the United States so I get the whole growing up between two cultures thing. On the other hand, I am really disappointed by the portrayal of my religion in this book. Not every Muslim hides their faith and for once I would like to read a book about a girl proud of her religion and standing up for it as the main character (man vs world instead of man vs self). Because for a person like me, reading about someone else's cowering and fear actually only makes me more self-conscious about my religious identity too. Stories about believers dying and standing up for their faith are much more inspirational and encouraging to me. That's why I love the stories of the prophets of my faith. They went through some hardcore s\*\*\* and still believed and followed their religious practices. On the other hand, I don't think I am the audience for this book. I think this book was written for non-Muslims and non-Arabs so that they may

sympathize with those groups. And THAT'S why there is some things in there that I feel are controversial. They were included to appease non-Muslim readers. And by the looks of the other reviews, it works.

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## Becky says

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. 2009. (Pub Jan) TEN THINGS I HATE ABOUT ME. Scholastic. 297.

Randa Abdel-Fattah's previous novel, *Does My Head Look Big In This?*, was one that I was ambivalent about. I found the perspective interesting--a Muslim teen girl who feels caught between cultures: wanting to be true to her faith and family but also wanting to fit in with the popular, beautiful people.

*Ten Things I Hate About You* is similar in theme. We've got a narrator caught between two identities: Jamie and Jamilah. At home, she's proud to be Lebanese and Muslim. At school, she wants to blend in with everyone else. (She wears colored contacts and dyes her hair blond.) She doesn't want to be seen as ethnic. She doesn't want to be seen with the nerds either. Which is why she goes along with the 'in' crowd even when it makes her cringe. She's so caught up in being on the fringes of the fringes of the 'cool' people, that she doesn't ever risk being herself, having a voice, taking a stand. She's so completely different from Timothy--a nerd who shows no reaction to the endless teasing he receives. He's himself no matter what, come what may.

But being two different people is time consuming and exhausting. Which is why it is so refreshing when she begins to consider--for the first time ever--being herself. What brings about this change? A group of email exchanges with a stranger. A boy--her own age it seems--who has chosen to write because he likes her identity "Ten\_Things\_I\_Hate\_About\_Me@intermail.com." His "Rage\_Against\_The\_Machine@intermail.com" responses were my absolute favorite bits of the novel.

So the novel is broken into three sections in a way. Her school identity, Jamie; her home identity, Jamilah; and her online identity. I found the school sections hard to stomach because I think they reveal her uncomfortableness and awkwardness all too well. "I wish I could talk in capital letters at school. Use exclamation marks and highlighter pens on all my sentences. Stand out bold, italicized, and underlined. At the moment I'm a rarely used font in microscopic size with no shading or emphasis." (88)

I liked this novel. I did. I found it interesting and entertaining.

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## Kendra says

2.5 stars. There's just something about contemporary books that I find boring, especially when compared to fantasy. So yes, this did bore me...I found myself not caring enough about the story and characters to want to keep reading. But I pushed myself to finish it, and I'm glad to say that the last few chapters were more interesting than the rest. I wasn't expecting to love it when I picked it up though, and my feelings are still the same as my expectations before I read it.

Jamilah has never exposed her Lebanese and Muslim heritage to her classmates at school in fear of ridicule. However, due to certain events in tenth grade, she's constantly thinking about this matter and worrying about

it. Especially when she meets guys in school and online who encourage her to be true to herself. She feels oppressed by her widower father who is extremely strict. The book is about Jamilah's journey to accept herself in all places.

The majority of the characters I either felt ambiguous to or disliked them. Only a select few I liked, including Timothy and Amy. There were several times when I didn't even like Jamilah for her being meek and selfish. She improved a lot by the end, and her weak traits were probably done on purpose, but I still didn't enjoy reading it. Timothy was a great person, and I wish he was in the book more often, but seeing that it's mostly centered around Jamilah's life, Timothy took a back seat. In fact, I wish there were more details in general about everything.

See, as I mentioned before, the main problem I had was that I couldn't bring myself to care much about the book. I was bored and it didn't spark my interest. I really don't have much against it, and I agree that it has a very good theme.

So do I recommend it? Not really, because it was boring for me. But if you're specifically looking for a self-acceptance novel with non-Caucasian involved problems, then you should consider this book.

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### **Yoonmee says**

This is very similar to Abdel-Fattah's first young adult novel *Does My Head Look Big In This?*, so, unless you read *Does My Head* and absolutely loved it, there's no big reason to read both. I wasn't as crazy about this one as I was *Does My Head* but that's possibly b/c I read this second. Both are about Australian teenage girls who struggle with being both Australian and Muslim, both have very likable and amusing protagonists, both have extremely predictable plots (the old "I'm confused about who I am... and now at the end of the book I'm more at peace with who I am" theme). Sometimes it felt like Abdel-Fattah was hitting the reader over the head through thinly-veiled dialogues between the characters about Muslim and immigrant life in Australia, but, well, it's obvious she has an agenda and I certainly don't disagree with her agenda. In fact, I'm a fan of her work. I guess my main complaints are that the plot is waaaaaaaay too predictable (but she makes up for it with such a likable character in Jamilah/Jamie) and she likes to tell us exactly what's going on, instead of having the reader deduce things on his/her own. All that said, I liked it and would recommend it.

Oh, one more thing: Sure, Jamilah can go as Jamie in school, but none of her classmates noticed her obviously ethnic sounding last name? I find it hard to believe that none of her classmates ever noticed her real name is Jamilah Towfeek. It's one thing to go by a nickname, but it's sorta hard to hide your full name during school when your name will show up on report cards, class lists, yearbooks, etc.

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